Synopsis of the Thesis Entitled

Exploring the Human Condition: Colonialism, Racism, Identity, Power, and Belonging in Gurnah's and Coetzee's Novels

Submitted to

SWAMI RAMANAND TEERTH MARATHWADA UNIVERSITY,

NANDED (M.S.) INDIA

For the Award of the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy in English

Under the Faculty of Arts (Humanities)

Researcher

Mr. Shivcharan Sakharam Watode

Research Supervisor

Dr.Vijaya Satwaji Nandapurkar

(M.A.SET, NET, PhD.)

Professor and Head Department of English

Shri Shivaji College Parbhani,(M.S) India.

December 2024

Exploring the Human Condition: Colonialism, Racism, Identity, Power, and Belonging in Gurnah's and Coetzee's Novels

Introduction

This study delves into the profound and enduring impact of colonialism, racism, and the struggle for identity, power, and belonging in the works of acclaimed novelists. J.M.Coetzee (born February 9, 1940) is a renowned South African-Australian novelist, essayist, linguist, translator, and recipient of the 2003 Nobel Prize in Literature. His works often explore themes of colonialism, apartheid, and the human condition, and he is known for his sparse, yet profound prose. Born in Cape Town, South Africa, Coetzee's early life was shaped by the country's apartheid regime. He studied English and mathematics at the University of Cape Town and later earned a Ph.D. in literature from the University of Texas at Austin. He returned to South Africa and joined the faculty of the University of Cape Town, where he taught English and translated works from the Dutch. Coetzee's literary career began with the publication of his first novel, *Dusklands*, in 1974. This was followed by a string of critically acclaimed works, including *Waiting for the Barbarians* (1980), *Life & Times of Michael K* (1983), *Disgrace* (1999), and *Elizabeth Costello* (2003). He has won numerous awards, including the Booker Prize twice, the CNA Literary Award thrice, the Jerusalem Prize, the Prix Femina étranger, and the Irish Times International Fiction Prize. In 2003, Coetzee was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature "for his novels that, in the guise of narratives and parables, elucidate the experience of outsiders, marginalization, and the exilic experience." He has since become a naturalized Australian citizen and continues to write and lecture and Abdulrazak Gurnah (born 20 December 1948) is a Tanzanian-born novelist and critic who was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature in 2021 "for his uncompromising and compassionate penetration of the effects of colonialism and the fate of the refugee in the gulf between cultures and continents." Born in Zanzibar, Gurnah fled to England as a teenager during the Zanzibar Revolution in 1964. He has since lived in England, where he has taught English and postcolonial literature at the University of Kent. Gurnah's novels often explore themes of displacement, migration, memory, and identity, drawing on his own experiences as a refugee and his observations of the lives of immigrants in Britain. His works include *Memory of Departure* (1987), *By the Sea* (1990), *Paradise* (1994), *Desertion* (2005), and By the Lake (2016). Gurnah's writing is known for its lyrical prose and its exploration of the

psychological and emotional impact of displacement and cultural dislocation. His work has been praised for its sensitivity and its ability to capture the complexities of human experience in the face of historical trauma.

Both authors, though writing from distinct geographical and historical contexts – Gurnah from Zanzibar and Tanzania, Coetzee from South Africa – grapple with the complex legacies of European imperialism and its devastating consequences for the colonized. Through their powerful narratives, Gurnah and Coetzee explore the multifaceted dimensions of the human condition: the trauma of displacement and exile, the erosion of cultural identity, the insidious nature of racism, the abuse of power, and the yearning for a sense of belonging in a fractured world. Their novels offer poignant and unflinching portrayals of individuals navigating the psychological, social, and political landscapes shaped by historical injustices, while simultaneously searching for meaning and redemption in the face of adversity. This exploration will examine key themes and motifs recurring in their works, such as the psychological and social alienation experienced by characters grappling with their colonial past, the complexities of interracial relationships, the search for a homeland and a sense of rootedness, and the struggle for agency and resistance against oppressive systems. By analyzing the narrative techniques, stylistic choices, and thematic concerns of Gurnah and Coetzee, this study aims to illuminate the enduring relevance of their work in understanding the contemporary world, where the legacies of colonialism and the struggles for justice and equality continue to shape human experience.

The human condition, shaped by themes of colonialism, racism, identity, power, and belonging, forms a central focus of literature in postcolonial studies. Abdulrazak Gurnah and J.M. Coetzee, two acclaimed novelists, explore these themes with depth and nuance, offering profound insights into the struggles of individuals and societies affected by historical and contemporary injustices. Gurnah, a Tanzanian novelist, delves into the experiences of exile, displacement, and cultural alienation in his novels *Paradise* (1994), *By the Sea* (2001), The *Last Gift* (2011), and *Pilgrims Way* (1988). His works bring to life the psychological and social repercussions of forced migration and the enduring quest for identity and belonging among refugees and migrants.

Similarly, J.M. Coetzee, a South African author and Nobel laureate, examines the moral, social, and political complexities of apartheid, colonialism, and power structures in his novels

Age of Iron (1990), *Waiting for the Barbarians* (1980), *Foe* (1989), and *Dusklands* (1974). His works critique the legacies of imperialism and the ethical dilemmas faced by individuals navigating oppressive systems. Through a comparative analysis of these selected novels, this research seeks to explore how Gurnah and Coetzee portray the crisis of the human condition, highlighting the shared and unique ways in which they address the universal themes of colonialism, racism, identity, power, and belonging. Their narratives provide a lens to understand the socio-political and psychological dimensions of the postcolonial world and offer profound commentaries on the resilience and vulnerability of the human spirit. This study positions their works as complementary voices in postcolonial literature, revealing the shared legacies of colonial trauma and the diverse cultural contexts that shape the experiences of their characters.

Objectives

- To examine the representation of colonialism and its enduring legacy in the novels of Coetzee and Gurnah.
- To analyze the different forms of racism depicted in the novels, including overt and subtle expressions of prejudice and discrimination.
- To investigate the complexities of identity formation and the challenges faced by individuals navigating multiple cultural and social identities.
- To explore the dynamics of power and the abuse of power in the context of colonialism, political oppression, and social inequality.
- To examine the themes of displacement, exile, and the search for belonging in the lives of characters grappling with loss and alienation.
- To compare and contrast the literary styles and techniques employed by Coetzee and Gurnah to convey their respective visions of the human condition.

Hypothesis

This research hypothesizes that the novels of J.M. Coetzee and Abdulrazak Gurnah offer a critical lens on the enduring impact of colonialism and racism on individual and collective identities. Furthermore, their works demonstrate the complexities of navigating power dynamics, the search for belonging in a fragmented world, and the ongoing struggle for human dignity and social justice.

4. Review of Literature

The existing body of scholarly research on Abdulrazak Gurnah and J.M. Coetzee underscores their critical contributions to postcolonial literature, with themes of colonialism, racism, identity, power, and belonging being pivotal in their narratives. Both authors have been extensively studied within the framework of postcolonial theory, offering rich insights into the complexities of human experiences shaped by historical and sociopolitical forces. Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978) provides a foundational perspective for analyzing Gurnah and Coetzee's works, particularly in their critique of how Western narratives construct the "other." Said's emphasis on cultural imperialism aligns with Gurnah's portrayal of displaced individuals and Coetzee's critique of imperial systems. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's essay, *Can the Subaltern Speak?* (further deepens the analysis by addressing the silencing of marginalized voices, a recurring motif in both authors' novels. Homi Bhabha's concepts of hybridity and mimicry serve as a lens to explore identity negotiation, a central concern in Gurnah's By the Sea and Coetzee's Foe. These theoretical frameworks are crucial in understanding how both authors navigate the cultural and psychological consequences of colonialism.

Critical Studies on Abdulrazak Gurnah, highlights focus on displacement and the migrant experience. Dr. Hilda Jeyakumari Brainee's critical review of Desertion explores the novel's deconstruction of colonial and postcolonial identities, emphasizing human emotions beyond socio-political barriers. ÖZLEM ARSLAN's study of By the Sea and Admiring Silence examines the role of silence as both a consequence of trauma and a form of resistance, particularly in the context of migration and cultural alienation. Yujin Du and Dan Cui's analysis of Gurnah's memory narratives explores themes of diaspora, identity, and racial antagonism, offering insights into his nuanced portrayal of the refugee experience.

These works collectively emphasize Gurnah's commitment to unveiling the psychological toll of migration and cultural dislocation. Critical Studies on J.M. Coetzee, His works have been widely analyzed for their interrogation of colonialism, power dynamics, and the human condition. Avinash L. Pandhare and Dr. Rajendra R. Jane's study highlights Coetzee's portrayal of the oppressive relationships between colonizers and the colonized, as seen in Waiting for the Barbarians and Dusklands. Mohammed Ahmeduddin's research examines gender and racial dynamics alongside Coetzee's innovative narrative strategies, particularly in Age of Iron and Foe. These studies reflect Coetzee's exploration of apartheid and post-apartheid struggles, focusing on moral ambiguity, violence, and systemic injustice.

Comparative Insights,While Gurnah delves into personal and cultural displacement, Coetzee critiques institutionalized systems of oppression. Both authors use their narratives to question dominant power structures and the enduring effects of colonial histories. The universal struggles for identity, belonging, and resistance against systemic violence are evident in their works. Despite their different narrative styles and cultural contexts, Gurnah and Coetzee share a commitment to exposing the complexities of the human condition under colonial and postcolonial pressures. This research integrates these diverse perspectives, bridging the thematic and narrative overlaps between Gurnah's and Coetzee's works. By doing so, it aims to contribute to the broader discourse on postcolonial literature, offering new dimensions to the understanding of displacement, identity, and power in contemporary narratives.

Research Methodology and Tentative Chapter Scheme

The research design used in this study is Comparative Approach, exploratory, Literary Analysis and interpretative types. The procedure adopted in the content analysis and description is of both intra-textual and intertextual nature. The methods common to all disciplines like comparison, contrast, analysis, induction, deduction, Thematic and Contextual Study, Qualitative Analysis, etc. are also used in this study. MLA 9th edition will be taken for consideration as a guideline of citation and other necessary collection arrangement of information. The present study is divided into five chapters planned according to the need of working on specific aspects as per below.

Chapter one :Introduction

This chapter will provide a comprehensive introduction to the research, highlighting the key themes of colonialism, racism, identity, power, and belonging as explored in the works of Abdulrazak Gurnah and J.M. Coetzee. It will discuss the significance of studying these authors within the framework of postcolonial literature, their contributions to global literary discourse, and the relevance of their works in understanding the human condition.

Chapter Two: Colonial Legacies and Racial Dynamics in the Selected Novels of J.M.Coetzee and Abdulrazak Gurnah.

This chapter will delve into the portrayal of colonialism and racism in the novels of Gurnah (Paradise, By the Sea) and Coetzee (Waiting for the Barbarians, Age of Iron). It will examine how both authors critique the dehumanizing effects of colonial systems and racial discrimination on individuals and communities. The analysis will include a discussion of how colonial power dynamics shape social hierarchies and perpetuate systemic oppression. Themes of resistance, subjugation, and the psychological consequences of colonial rule will be explored through character studies and narrative strategies.

Chapter Three: Identity and Power depicted in the novels of J.M.Coetzee and Abdulrazak Gurnah

This chapter will focus on the intricate relationship between identity and power in the selected novels. Gurnah's exploration of migrant identities in Pilgrim's Way and The Last Gift will be juxtaposed with Coetzee's interrogation of power dynamics in Dusklands and Foe. It will analyze how characters navigate their identities in the face of oppression, cultural displacement, and systemic power structures. The chapter will also investigate the role of memory, trauma, and cultural hybridity in shaping identity, as well as the intersection of gender and power in postcolonial contexts.

Chapter Four:. Exile, Belonging, and the Human Condition in the select novels of J.M.Coetzee and Abdulrazak Gurnah

This chapter will explore the recurring themes of exile, belonging, and the human condition in Gurnah's and Coetzee's narratives. Drawing on works such as By the Sea and Paradise by Gurnah and Age of Iron and Waiting for the Barbarians by Coetzee, it will examine how the authors depict the struggles of displaced individuals in search of identity and belonging. The role of memory in preserving cultural and personal histories amidst exile will be a central focus. This chapter will also address how both authors critique the broader human experience, reflecting on themes of alienation, resilience, and the quest for dignity in hostile environments.

Chapter Five : Conclusion

The final chapter will summarize the key findings of the research, emphasizing the shared and distinct approaches of Gurnah and Coetzee in addressing the themes of colonialism, racism, identity, power, and belonging. It will reflect on the implications of their works for contemporary literary studies and postcolonial discourse, while identifying potential areas for future research.

A Select Bibliography

Primary Sources:

Coetzee, J. M. *Age of Iron*. 1990, ci.nii.ac.jp/ncid/BA25831955.

---. *Dusklands*. Penguin, 1985.

Coetzee, J M. *Foe*. Penguin UK, 2015.

Coetzee, John Maxwell. *Waiting for the Barbarians*. 1980, ci.nii.ac.jp/ncid/BA03271303.

Gurnah, Abdulrazak. *By The Sea: By the winner of the Nobel Prize in Literature 2021*. Bloomsbury Publishing, 2022.

---. *Paradise: A BBC Radio 4 Book at Bedtime, by the winner of the Nobel Prize in Literature 2021*. Bloomsbury Publishing, 2022.

---. *Pilgrims Way: By the winner of the Nobel Prize in Literature 2021*. Bloomsbury Publishing, 2021.

---. *The Last Gift: By the winner of the 2021 Nobel Prize in Literature*. A&C Black, 2011.

Secondary source :

Ahmeduddin, Mohammed. *Gender Race and Narrative Strategies in the Novels of John Maxwell Coetzee*.

ARSLAN, ÖZLEM. *A POSTCOLONIAL NARRATOLOGICAL STUDY OF SILENCE IN ABDULRAZAK GURNAH"S ADMIRING SILENCE AND BY THE SEA*.

Attridge, Derek. *J. M. Coetzee and the Ethics of Reading: Literature in the Event*. University of Chicago Press, 2021.

Brainee, Hilda Jeyakumari. "Post-Colonial Experiences: Based on Abdulrazak Gurnah's 'Desertion' and Other Novels: Rewriting Cultural History." *International Journal of Linguistics Literature & Translation*, vol. 5, no. 9, Sept. 2022, pp. 153–59. https://doi.org/10.32996/ijllt.2022.5.9.15.

Du, Yujin, and Dan Cui. "A Study of Gurnah's Memory Narrative and Diaspora Identity." *Communication Society and Media*, vol. 5, no. 2, Aug. 2022, p. p1. https://doi.org/10.22158/csm.v5n2p1.

Gurnah, Abdulrazak. *Essays on African Writing: Contemporary Literature*. African Writers Series, 1993.

Mogili, Nishant. "'MIGRANTS' TRAUMA AND TEXTURE OF SURVIVAL IN ABDUL RAZZAK GURNAH'S FICTION." *IJCRT*.

Pandhare, Avinash. "POST-COLONIALISM IN THE NOVELS OF J M COETZEE." *'Research Journey' International Multidisciplinary E- Research Journal*, Jan. 2016, www.academia.edu/43454467/POST_COLONIALISM_IN_THE_NOVELS_OF_J_M_COETZEE.

Pavitwar, Gajanan. *"A DEPICTION OF REFUGEE CULTURE IN SELECT NOVELS OF ABDULRAZAK GURNAH : A CRITICAL STUDY*.

Ray, None Dr Shobha Tiwari. "Racism and Alienation in J M Coetzee's Novel Disgrace." *Innovative Research Thoughts*, vol. 9, no. 1, Mar. 2023, pp. 192–99. https://doi.org/10.36676/irt.v9.i1.28.

Said, Edward W. *Orientalism*. Penguin Books India, 1995.

Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. *Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" 1985, Estefania Peñafiel Loaiza Two Works Series: Ausst. Kat. Afterall Central Saint Martins University of the Arts London*. Walther Konig Verlag, 2020.

Zhou, Shutao. "Review and Prospect of the Research on Coetzee's Works." *Frontiers in Art Research*, vol. 2, no. 1, Apr. 2020, https://doi.org/10.25236/far.2020.020104.

Researcher **Research Supervisor**

(Shivcharan Sakharam Watode) **(Dr.Vijaya Satwaji Nandapurkar)**